

Abandoned

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Abandoned

by [Adriana in the Snow](#)

Summary

When Phil, a lone ancient vampire, is called upon for aid by a younger vampire as a group of rogues terrorize the humans in her territory, he finds more than he'd expected in the remains of a decimated village. A lone, ill, human managed to survive the rogues with more cleverness and gall than Phil had ever seen. But will that will to live let him survive the illness that has been slowly killing him?

Or will Phil have to make a choice he'd never anticipated himself ever making.

This is a prequel to my story Scorned, and I think it would probably be more interesting to people who have read Scorned, but it is a stand alone.

(It's 3 chapters for now, but I might someday add a bonus chapter of more fluffy things.)

Notes

Adriana, this is the only DSMP fic universe you are not actively publishing in right now.
Why do you do these things you do?

Ashes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The village was still smoldering when Phil came upon it. It had clearly been a good-sized village not even a week ago, but now it was a pile of burnt ash but for two buildings on its outskirts that were still, somehow, mostly standing. There was also the unmistakable smell of burnt human flesh which set even Phil's stomach rolling.

He wanted very much to stop breathing so he wouldn't have to smell that scent, but unfortunately, his nose was what was leading him to his target. He'd been tracking this motherfucker and his group for weeks; he would not let his long-forgotten gag reflex force him off the trail.

He'd gotten a frantic message pleading for aid from one of the territories neighboring his own. Considering most held a significant amount of fear towards him, it was a bit of a surprise, but the young vampire who oversaw this territory had known he was her best option. She was a much younger vampire than Phil (most were), but she was old enough to have her own small territory and the beginnings of a coven of her own. This coven included a less than one-year-turned fledgling.

She simply did not have the resources to deal with the group of rogues that had come smashing through her and a few other vampire's territories recently. They were a group of much older vampires and, though still small, they outnumbered most of the covens that protected these lands. They'd taken to bouncing between the different territories, murdering any humans they sniffed out and pillaging any settlements they stumbled across.

The group hadn't dared to step foot on any land under Phil's protection which is why he'd been unaware of their activities until being contacted. Phil had a much larger territory, less than a week away from here by horseback and only a couple of nights away by his own two feet. He was much older than any vampire around, didn't have a coven (let alone a fledgling) to worry about, and had a strong and well documented dislike for those who didn't value human life. (The reason all of the territories around Phil's were small upstarts was due to what some referred to as a purge of the surrounding areas perpetrated by Phil himself a few centuries before.)

If this group of rogues thought skirting the edges of his territory would keep them safe, they were sorely mistaken. He'd made that abundantly clear to most of its members only a few nights before.

He'd caught up to the group as they prepared to cross into a different vampire's territory. He'd dispatched the lot of them without much trouble. However, he'd quickly realized one of their number was missing both from accounts of their numbers and by being able to tell one of their coven members was missing by smell. He'd had to retrace their footsteps slowly back along their path to track down the ghost scent.

Now he was here, in a village that had clearly been their last target and the ghost scent was no longer a barely noticeable hint of something in the air, but a concrete smell even as he had trouble detangling it from the smell of human and death. The source was here.

Phil's nose led him towards one the still standing buildings. The air in the town was a blanket of cold death, the only hint of life Phil could sense coming from the direction of the last rogue vampire's scent. When he stepped in the building, he noticed a soft rhythmic thumping sound. He followed it and the smell of the vampire down the hall.

This building had been some sort of medical care area judging by the smell of herbs Phil could just make out over the smell of rogue vampire and burning flesh. He passed two small rooms with beds. One bed had long dried blood on it, and both were vacant.

The room at the end of the hall was where the sound and smell were coming from. The door was thrown open wide to reveal a third bed. There was a blood trail on the floor of this room starting near the bed and cumulating at a closed closet door. However, Phil was slightly taken aback when he realized the dried blood belonged to the vampire he was searching for, not a human.

Had the rogue injured themself and then dragged themself to the closet to recover? The sound he'd been hearing was coming from the closet as well.

Phil was certain he could handle anyone behind that door, but he was still cautious as he approached. Something felt... wrong. The vampire's scent was confusing, permeating the room with the smell of human and death. It made logical sense considering the vampire had taken part in the murder of all of the humans who'd lived here, but still something pinged oddly at Phil's instincts.

However, he'd come this far, so though he proceeded with caution, he still reached out and pulled open the closet door. A foot that had been leaning against the closet door thunked lifelessly to the floor, startling Phil back a step. The rogue's body was a mass of unmoving darkness bent at angles that would be uncomfortable even for a vampire. Phil lightly kicked the foot now sticking out of the closet. The body didn't even twitch.

"Hmm," Phil said.

That's when Phil remembered the noise he'd been following as well. The thump came again, and Phil's head jerked up, searching the closet for the source. He did not see it immediately, but then there was another thump. Phil bent down and tilted his head for a closer look.

He could just barely make out that there was something underneath the rogue's corpse.

Phil suddenly knew what the noise was. He hadn't recognized it mostly because he wasn't expecting it, but also because it was slower than he was used to.

A human heartbeat.

It was slow in the human's unconscious state, but that is what it was. How had he missed the smell of a living human?

Yet, as he leaned forward and pulled the vampire's corpse off of the human, he quickly figured out what was muddying his sense of smell. The human was smeared in blood, but none of it was their own. The dead vampire's dry, rotting blood was particularly slathered over the human's wrists, insides of their elbows, and in a ring around their neck. It almost completely blocked the smell of human and life, so much so that Phil and likely any vampire who casually wandered by would dismiss the scents.

Phil had only a moment to process the sight of the unconscious human before said human started to stir, disturbed by the sudden lack of weight on top of them.

The heartbeat stuttered and sped up erratically as the human gasped. Their eyes flew open, and Phil hastily made sure his own red eyes were glamoured blue. The human tried to sit up and seemed to be struggling with it, but they still brandished a bloodied knife.

At first, Phil wondered how the human had made a corpse out of a vampire with the clearly metal knife until he realized there was also a thin piece of wood in his hand, practically glued to the knife with dried blood now. Clever, Phil thought idly. They'd made a hole with the knife and finished him off with the wood.

The young man or perhaps older boy looked around wildly, his terrified eyes locking on Phil.

"It's okay," Phil said, putting his hands up. He lowered himself slowly to his knees. The human watched him closely with wide eyes. "You're okay," Phil said. "You did it. Good job."

"I..." The human's voice cracked.

"Why don't we get you out of there and get you some water?" Phil suggested. "Then we can talk. Phil offered a hand to him.

The human looked at Phil's hand for a moment before nodding. Instead of taking Phil's offered hand and being forced to give up his weapon, he crawled out of the closet on his own power. He did let Phil help him to his wobbling feet.

He was breathing heavily by the time he was standing. If he was not leaning so heavily against Phil, Phil thought he would be taller than him. He gripped Phil's arm with his free hand as he bent over in a coughing fit so intense Phil was worried one of his vital organs might come out of his mouth.

Phil almost literally carried the boy to the empty bed nearby. "Here," Phil offered once the coughing mostly subsided. He held his waterskin to the human's lips. "Slow sips," Phil reminded gently as the boy accepted a drink.

The boy drew back after a few seconds and shook his head when Phil offered him more. Phil nodded and began to search the nearby drawer for a clean cloth. Finding one, he wetted it slightly with the waterskin.

He was careful to move slowly as he reached for the boy's free hand. He started gently wiping off the worst of the caked-on blood.

“Can I have the other one?” Phil asked quietly. The human stared at him for a long moment with seemingly uncomprehending eyes, but then offered Phil the bloodied hand, make-shift stake and all. Phil very gently pulled his fingers from the weapon one at a time. He didn’t resist, but the weapon stuck slightly to his skin. Phil set the weapon aside on the nightstand. Halfway through cleaning the second hand and wrist, he had to grab a second clean cloth from the drawer. It wasn’t perfect when he was done, but the smell of the vampire’s corpse and the smell of the living human slowly started separating into two distinct profiles.

Then, Phil moved onto his face. The boy flinched when Phil went for his face and Phil paused. After a moment, the human leaned forward to allow Phil to clean the blood off his cheeks. He was tense as Phil worked but didn’t draw away again even when Phil got to his neck. He could feel the bob of the human’s throat as he swallowed uncertainly while Phil scrubbed at the blood covering his pulse point.

“Who are you?” the human asked when Phil finally put down the rag. His wrecked voice couldn’t get above a whisper.

“My name’s Phil,” Phil replied. “Here. Have a bit more water.”

He accepted Phil’s waterskin again. He was shaking, Phil noticed while helping him steady the waterskin. He wasn’t sure if it was from the cold, but Phil still pulled the bed’s quilt up over his shoulders. He’d need new clothes and a proper washing soon.

“I’m Wilbur,” the human offered after his drink.

“Hello, Wilbur. It’s nice to meet you,” Phil said.

“It’s nice to drag someone out of a closet from underneath a vampire’s corpse?” Wilbur asked, skeptically.

“Well,” Phil said with a gentle smile, being sure to hide his teeth. “It’s always nice to meet someone so clever.”

“How am I clever?” Wilbur asked.

“Well,” Phil said. “Perhaps I’m mistaken, but it looked like to me that you managed to kill a vampire that was attacking you, with a knife and a... stick?”

Wilbur glanced over at the bloody weapon. “Pencil.”

“A pencil,” Phil amended, “and then you used his dead body to disguise your scent so no other vampires could find you. I’d call that clever.”

Wilbur pressed his lips together. “I wouldn’t,” he said. He looked down at his still slightly red tinted hands. “I don’t even know why I bothered,” he muttered to himself.

Phil was going to protest the words, but Wilbur went into another coughing fit before he could. He put a hand on the boy’s back and rubbed gentle circles until he managed to suppress his coughs, shuddering and spitting up bile into the clean cloth Phil handed him.

Phil offered him the water again, but Wilbur just shook his head and turned away. Phil frowned as he put the waterskin away at his belt.

Wilbur breathed with strained gasps for a few minutes before speaking again, his voice somehow worse than it had been before. “What... happened?” he asked. “Out there?”

Phil paused and sighed softly. He’d been expecting the question, but that didn’t make answering it any easier.

“Your village was attacked by a group of 7 vampires,” Phil explained. “They’re all dead now. I killed 6 and well...” Phil glanced at the lifeless shape sprawled half out of the closet door.

“How bad?” Wilbur asked.

The hesitation from Phil seemed to be enough of an answer for Wilbur. The human seemed to shrink where he sat. He pressed a hand over his mouth.

Phil put his hand on the boy’s back but hastily pulled it away when he tensed. “I’m sorry.”

“I have a brother,” Wilbur said, and Phil felt a pang in his dead heart at how absolutely destroyed he sounded. “Is there any way...?”

No.

Phil hesitated once again, unsure how to say it. “Would he have been in the town?” he asked.

Wilbur made a keening sound into his hands and Phil closed his eyes in sympathetic pain.

“He would have found me instead of you if he were alive,” Wilbur said. “Oh, *God*.” He sobbed harder, but the world didn’t even allow him that relief for long as it set off another coughing fit.

“I’m so sorry,” Phil said. This time when Phil put a careful hand on the boy’s back, he didn’t flinch or pull away. Instead, the boy collapsed towards him, and Phil ended up with an armful of human. “I’m sorry.”

Chapter End Notes

Congratulations
It's **AN 18-YEAR-OLD
DYING HUMAN**



Question

Chapter Notes

We have some very unrealistic dying of an unspecified illness in this chapter. Don't look at me. I'm not that kind of doctor. We're here for the drama anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They stayed near the remnants of the town for more than a week, just in case. Phil set up a small camp for them far enough away from the town that neither he nor Wilbur could still smell the putrid stench the town gave off. Every night, Phil checked the town for any signs of life. Every night, he had to report back to Wilbur the lack of any indication anyone else had survived the massacre.

Wilbur never returned to the town after Phil literally carried him out of it, his face tucked into Phil's shoulder so he wouldn't have to see. He wouldn't have been able to make the trek back on his own, and he never asked for Phil's help. He slept more during the day than Phil did, let alone the night.

At first Phil had thought his lethargy and weakness was caused by shock and grief as well as by a bit of dehydration from being trapped in that closet. However, his horrible cough never seemed to retreat. It was so bad that a few times it had made him throw up the food Phil brought him. His breath was a horrible wheeze when he slept. Phil had trouble sleeping through the days, worried the human would stop breathing when he wasn't listening.

The human was sick. He was dying.

He'd explained his illness to Phil. He'd been sick for a long time. His brother had mostly been able to take care of him, but he'd gotten worse the last winter and it hadn't abated when the spring came. He'd ended up in the village medicine woman's home a few weeks ago, but she'd been able to do little else than give him herbs to make him sleep even more. She hadn't known what was wrong with him. No one did.

Phil had trouble believing it even while hearing his strained breaths and witnessing how his eyes fogged over sometimes even when he managed to be awake.

He was just so young, a few weeks off from turning 19-years-old, and so brave and clever. His body was weak, and he'd just lost so much, but when his eyes were clear they were so alive. When a vampire had come to his sick bed for easy prey, he had fought back, and he had lived. He had been fighting and still was fighting his illness even as it stole air from his lungs, and he lived. For now.

This human Phil had found was going to die. Soon. And it was a tragedy.

For now, Phil got to know him. He understandably struggled to talk about his brother, but he answered Phil's questions about himself. He'd been orphaned almost five years ago, but by the way he'd spoken of his mother, he hadn't been particularly upset by that even though he thought he should be.

He knew a lot about the nearby flora (more than Phil thought most humans probably did) and guided Phil's hands while Phil did his best to cook meals for him.

"I'm... not from this region," Phil explained as Wilbur patiently sorted through all of the roots and berries he'd brought back, separating out the poisonous ones from the edible.

He instructed Phil to pick certain flowers that soothed his throat when they were used to make tea and he constantly chewed on a grass that he said kept some of the pain at bay.

On the third night, when checking the destroyed town, Phil returned to the room he'd originally found Wilbur in. He grabbed everything that seemed to be a personal effect. There wasn't much: a few changes of clothes and a book or diary (Phil hadn't snooped). He also stole a pen from another room of the house in case it was a diary.

Then there was the knife. Upon a bit of scrutiny, it was clearly a special type of knife, though if it were special to Wilbur, he couldn't be sure. It was ornate under the thick layer of blood and Phil doubted it was from the medicine woman's home. So, it was probably Wilbur's, but it also might bring back some bad memories.

Phil ended up picking off the wood attached to it and cleaning it carefully in a nearby river. If Wilbur didn't want it, they could always dispose of it later.

The last thing Phil found in the room that wasn't clearly a piece of the medicine woman's furniture was some sort of musical instrument. Phil didn't know much about music, but he could tell it was some sort of string instrument. He decided to take it back to Wilbur as well.

Bringing an armful of Wilbur's possessions back to him seemed like a poor substitute for the brother the boy had been hoping Phil would bring him. He still took all of the offered objects into his lap with thanks. The knife was tucked into a sheath still tied to Wilbur's waist and he hid the book between the folds of his extra clothing, glancing at Phil like he wondered if Phil had looked inside it. He kept the instrument in his lap.

"Do you play?" Phil asked after about 30 minutes of watching Wilbur gently stroking a thumb along the wood.

Wilbur glanced up at him. "I do," he said. "I used to write and sing my own songs." His voice was wistful and as horribly hoarse as usual. "Also turn that meat, it's about to burn."

Phil grimaced and rotated the hog meat he'd been cooking for Wilbur. It was a little scorched already, but edible. He thought.

"You could still play," Phil said.

Wilbur shrugged, not meeting his eyes. "It's mostly just noise," he said. "No one really liked to hear me play except... my brother."

"Well," Phil said. "I'm not exactly a music critic. I'm sure I'd like whatever you play if you want to."

Wilbur didn't respond, and Phil went back to trying his best to remember how to prepare human food. He glanced up again as a few soft notes rung through the air. The little tune sounded good to Phil's ears, but Wilbur frowned and started to fiddle with how tight the strings were.

Then, he started to actually play. Phil almost burnt the hog meat completely in his distraction as he listened to the soft, sad melody Wilbur brought forth with his fingers. Phil didn't really pay attention to music anymore. The new types of songs and different instruments always sounded funny to his ears. Music didn't even resemble what it was in his childhood. Yet, what Wilbur played that night seemed somehow different than any music he'd heard in the last few millennia. It used the style and an instrument of the times, but the sounds he made and the emotions behind them seemed timeless.

The meat was done (well, overdone) by the time Wilbur finished playing.

"That was very good, Wilbur," Phil told him as the boy set aside his instrument to accept a plate of meat and vegetables. "Definitely not noise."

Wilbur shrugged. "Thanks," he said, his voice clipped.

Phil reached forward to touch his arm softly and the boy looked up at him, face flickering in the firelight. "Really," Phil said. "That was something else, Wilbur. It was amazing."

Wilbur's face was chronically pale, but his body seemed to be able to spare a bit of blood for his cheeks in that moment. "Sure," he said, looking back down at his plate. "Whatever."

But he'd play a little music for Phil every night even when he clearly wasn't feeling well.

It was the eighth night that Phil had checked the village and there still was nothing. The flames were out, and the smell was just barely starting to fade. When he returned to the campsite, Wilbur looked up at him. Phil could see the last little bit of hope die in his eyes.

Dinner was quiet that night. He thought Wilbur wasn't going to be able to bring himself to play, but as Phil began to clean up, he reached for his instrument. The tune he played was short and strangely happy compared to everything else he'd ever played. Phil also didn't think it was played for him.

When he finished, he put the instrument down and looked at Phil over the fire. "It's time to go," he said quietly. "We can't stay here forever."

Phil nodded even though he wasn't sure how he was going to travel with someone so fragile. "We should go East," he said, towards Phil's own territory. "There's a town a few days travel

away.”

“...Okay,” Wilbur agreed. He looked at Phil and tapped his fingers against his knee a few times. “Tomorrow night?”

“If that’s what you’d like,” Phil agreed.

Wilbur nodded and then shifted to lay down by the fire. He’d probably fall asleep there, but Phil didn’t mind moving him into the tent before sunrise. “Thank you, Phil,” he said.

“Of course.”

That night, Phil quietly gathered everything he thought they’d need: a bit of food, the flowers and herbs that soothed Wilbur’s ailments, and some extra blankets he’d taken from the medicine woman’s house a few days before. He packed everything up in his bag and then carried Wilbur into the tent to sleep through the day.

When Phil woke the next night, Wilbur was staring at him through the darkness with a pinched expression that didn’t fade as Phil bustled around making him a bit of tea to soothe his throat and taking down and packing the tent.

“How...?” he asked as Phil took his cup and stored it away. “I can’t walk, Phil. Not for long. How do you plan to travel with me?”

Phil shrugged. “I’ll carry you.”

“...The whole way?”

“It will take longer,” Phil admitted, “but I’m stronger than I look.”

Wilbur didn’t say a word in response as Phil finished packing, threw the bag over his shoulder and reached for the boy.

He was light to Phil for now, but even vampiric strength had its limits. This would not be an easy journey, but once they made it to a town there would be horses and carriages.

They left Wilbur’s town behind in its destruction. Wilbur only glanced back in its direction once before tucking his face into Phil’s chest and going back to sleep.

At the beginning of their journey, Wilbur was awake a good amount. He’d speak to Phil in his soft scratchy voice, mostly about different stories he’d either read or made up. Yet, after a few days, he started to sleep more, and his cough started growing worse, not even close to being soothed by the tea. He began to start being unable to eat more than a bite of the food Phil prepared for him. When his temperature suddenly spiked about a week into their journey, Phil knew they needed to stop traveling.

He found a small cave to protect them from the elements and made up the comfiest bed he could with the blankets they had for Wilbur to rest on. He wasn’t sure if it was the travel that

made him sick (despite him never walking a step) or if it was just the natural course of the illness killing him.

Phil spent the next few days trying to coax tea, food, even just water down the boy's throat, but even when Phil convinced him to consume something, he usually ended up regurgitating it onto the cave floor within the hour.

His skin grew hotter by the minute and the brief times he was awake, he was either in horrible pain or he was so dazed Phil couldn't even get a coherent word out of him.

Phil hadn't seen a human slowly die like this in... in a long time.

(Since his mother.)

It all culminated in one horrible night. For once Wilbur wasn't sleeping all the time. Instead, he was wide awake, curled into a ball on his side. He'd said his chest and stomach hurt from all the coughing and he rocked back and forth there on the floor.

"How long," Wilbur spoke up suddenly. He cleared his throat for naught: it still came out as a rasp. "How long has it been since you found me?"

Phil thought back. "About 3 weeks," he said. "Twenty-three days."

"I missed my birthday," he said. "I'm 19 now. Didn't know if I'd see it." He coughed, a familiar but still gut-wrenching sound to Phil. He was shaking and tears pressed out of his closed eyes.

Phil found himself reaching forward to wipe them away. Wilbur's bright eyes popped open to look up at him at the touch.

"Your hands are so cold," he whispered.

"Sorry," Phil said, pulling back instantly. Considering Phil had been sedentary for days now they were probably like icicles to a normal human's skin let alone one with a fever.

"No," Wilbur said, his voice dipping slightly into a whine. "It's nice. The cold's nice. Come back."

"Oh," Phil said. He gave Wilbur what he wanted and gently placed his hands back on the human's forehead.

Wilbur closed his eyes and leaned into the touch with a sigh. Phil carefully carded his fingers through the boy's hair, feeling the heat from the top of his head.

"You're nice," Wilbur breathed.

Phil chuckled humorlessly.

"If I die today, you can go ahead eat me," Wilbur said. "I wouldn't mind."

Phil blinked down at him. “You know?” he asked, surprised. Wilbur just stared up at him like he was daft. “Of course, you know,” Phil said. “Clever boy.”

“If you were human, you would have died from your own cooking way before meeting me, Phil,” Wilbur said with a cough, “and you could at least pretend to eat. You also never went out in the sunlight and carried me for days in your arms. I know vampires exist. I’m not an idiot.”

“And you didn’t say anything?”

“Like I said. You’re nice.”

Huh. Phil looked down at him, a pulling sensation in his chest. “I wouldn’t eat your corpse, Wilbur.”

“Won’t matter to me,” Wilbur said grinning a crooked grin. “I’ll be dead.”

“Well, it would matter to me.”

“Why?” Wilbur asked, seeming genuinely curious.

“I’m not particularly a fan of chewing on corpses.”

“Then why wait?” Wilbur asked, eyes still just openly curious.

“Not all vampires are like the ones that attacked your village,” Phil said. “Most aren’t. That’s why I came to stop them. What they did was horrible by any specie’s standards.”

“Then why did you stay?” he asked. “If it wasn’t for a free meal? Why feed me and check the village for me and carry me all this way? Even if you were human, I’d expected you to quietly leave me to die in the woods while I was asleep that last night by the village.”

“I couldn’t have done that, Wilbur,” Phil said. “Not to you. Not when you’ve been so smart and brave and good. You didn’t deserve what happened to you at your village and you don’t deserve this. I can’t undo the actions of others or prevent you from ever being ill, but you also don’t deserve to die alone.”

Wilbur studied his face for a long moment and despite everything, oh were his eyes alive.
“Thank you, Phil. Really, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“I wrote a song for you, you know,” Wilbur said. “Well, it’s more of a poem since I never learned how to write down musical notes, but it’s in my song notebook. You can read it once I’m gone, but only once I’m gone.”

“Why only then?” Phil asked.

“Because it’s fucking embarrassing,” he said, beginning to cough once more, “and I’d probably keel over even if I were in perfect health if I saw anyone reading that book.” The

cough didn't seem to be a one off, descending into a fit that had him jerking against Phil's touch.

"Okay," Phil agreed, unsure if the boy even heard him, distracted as he was by his pain. "I'll wait."

He turned his head away from Phil to retch, though nothing came out as he'd emptied his stomach of even acid long before. Phil kept his cool hand on the back of his burning neck. He looked like he was in so much pain. Dying hurt so much. Phil hated that Wilbur was dying.

He...

It felt like something struck him hard on the chest, and he suddenly felt a question he'd never anticipated asking anyone bubbling to his lips.

He looked at Wilbur. He was so sick, but Phil... Phil could fix that. He felt his fangs distend as a very foreign instinct tugged at him.

Except... he made himself pause to think. Was that fair? Was it fair to ask now with Wilbur in so much pain and as death brushed its fingers through his hair next to Phil's own? Any scared and dying human would say yes if asked, but not all would actually mean it, perhaps not most. And Wilbur... Wilbur had a dead brother. He loved his brother, that was clear even if he had trouble talking about him to Phil. Would Wilbur ever forgive him for taking him away from his brother permanently?

Phil had never forgiven his own father and sire.

Yet, if Phil did not offer it now, it did not look like he'd ever have the opportunity.

Wilbur finished retching, shaking like a leaf. He turned back to Phil, curling into his arms. And Phil, Phil could almost see it, a path in life he'd never anticipated taking. But, he knew it was not fair to ask now. It would only be a selfish question.

So, he bit his tongue with his too sharp canines, focusing on holding and soothing Wilbur as he coughed and burned through the day and night.

Chapter End Notes

Wilbur (Watching Phil almost poison him multiple times over the last few weeks only to be stopped because Wilbur was paying attention.): You... you're not human are you?

Decisions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

To both of their surprise, Wilbur's fever broke more than a full day later. He came out of the other side paler and shakier than before, but he managed to get down some water and food after a few hours.

The first thing he did when he realized death had loosened its grip on him was find his song notebook and store it away in the folds of the clothes he was wearing with hunched shoulders and a sheepish expression.

"I won't look," Phil said, more amused than he'd normally be in his relief. "I promise."

"Just don't mention it," Wilbur said, staring at the floor, and despite how weak his voice was, Phil was still very glad to hear it.

"I honestly didn't even know it was a song notebook."

"Shut up." His light blush looked odd on his washed-out face, but it still made Phil chuckle.

Phil nursed him back to what passed for health over the next few days. Wilbur acted differently now, and it didn't seem to just be a result of the illness. Phil thought he might be acting... shy.

When he'd regained enough strength to play his instrument, he'd pause and ask Phil if he minded him playing before doing so, something he'd stopped doing after the first few times he'd played in Phil's presence.

If he hadn't been hiding himself writing in his song notebook before, he absolutely was now. The only time Phil even caught a glimpse of the thing was on return from trips to get food for himself or Wilbur and then it was hastily hidden from sight.

Phil also caught the boy staring at Phil a few times with an odd expression. However, whenever Phil turned to him, he'd look at the ground quickly with his shoulders hunched.

It made sense, Phil supposed. It had been a vulnerable moment for him when he'd literally been dying in Phil's arms. He'd clearly thought it would be the last conversation he'd ever have. Now that there was more, he didn't quite know what to do.

Phil could relate.

He'd been prepared to watch Wilbur die when it had been imminent, when there had been no chance to ask that would have been fair.

But now Wilbur's fever had broken, and he was regaining some of his strength. Wilbur would live. For now.

Which meant Phil had a decision to make.

When Phil had left his father's coven with *that* fledgling, he'd been pretty sure he never wanted to sire anyone ever. When the fledgling had intentionally walked into the sun, he'd discarded the idea entirely.

That had been a long time ago. Wilbur would be different. Wilbur would have a real choice.

Wilbur might not even say yes.

Phil did not have a decision to make, he realized. He only had a question to ask.

He'd been recovering for a week when Phil finally broached the topic that had been plaguing his mind. Wilbur was alive and fully in charge of his mental facilities. There was no promise he would be forever. Another episode like what had happened a week ago could come soon and the likelihood of him miraculously recovering once more was slim.

If Phil was to ask, he needed to ask now.

"Wilbur," Phil began when the last notes of Wilbur's latest song faded into nothing.

"Hmm?" he asked, still staring at his fingers.

"I want to ask you something."

Wilbur looked up at him. "What?"

God, Phil thought. He looked so tired. "I will understand if you say no," he said firmly, meeting Wilbur's eyes. "In fact, I promise I won't mention it ever again unless you bring it up, but I feel the need to ask."

Wilbur's expression turned curious, and Phil took a deep breath he only kind of needed.

"Would you want me to change you?"

"...Change me?"

"Into a vampire," Phil clarified. "It would cure your illness. You would live to be much older than 19. You also wouldn't ever die, at least not of natural causes." Phil glanced away.

"Considering everything, considering your brother, I would not blame you if you refused. You'd be changing species, changing into the same thing that caused you so much pain."

Wilbur's mouth was open when Phil looked back at him. "You... you would do that?" he asked.

"I would," Phil said, "in a heartbeat."

"You would want me...?"

"Yes. But it is up to you."

There was a long silence that hung between them. “I... can I think about it?”

“Of course,” Phil replied. “It is not a decision to be taken lightly. Take your time, but I do request you fully commit to a decision while you are still well enough to make it with a clear head. I know I am the one offering, but please... please don’t make a choice you will regret forever.”

“Forever,” Wilbur mused softly, eyes conflicted.

Forever indeed.

Wilbur stayed silent on the matter for the next two nights. Phil kept to his word and did not bring it up again even though it pained him. Wilbur started to use his songbook more often, scribbling in it even when Phil was nearby. There was always a contemplative look in his eyes, and Phil realized *this* was him making a decision. It almost made him sick to his stomach to see.

Phil could feel the energy in the cave change long before Wilbur spoke. It set him on edge, but Wilbur seemed determined to finish his tea before broaching the topic. So, Phil waited for him.

When he set aside his teacup, he opened his song notebook on his lap once more, but he didn’t pick up his pen to write. He didn’t even seem to be reading, just staring.

“I’ve made a decision, Phil.”

Phil tried not to turn too quickly to him and hoped he wore a neutral expression on his face.
“Okay.”

Wilbur bit his lip, his hand trailing over the edge of his song notebook.

“When I realized I was dying,” Wilbur began. “I had a conversation with my brother.” He glanced at Phil. “I know I haven’t... I haven’t talked about him much to you. It hurts too much, but we weren’t just brothers. We were identical twins.”

Phil nodded once.

“There was never a time in our lives when one of us was without the other. So,” he chocked a bit, but Phil didn’t think it was a cough, “so when it was clear I was going to die and, and leave him one day, I made him make me a promise.”

Wilbur looked down at the open page in his songbook. He seemed to read a few words before taking a shaky breath and continuing.

“I told him to promise me that, after I died, he’d find some way to live. And he did. He promised me.” Wilbur closed his eyes. “I was supposed to be the one to die, Phil, not him. God, it *hurts* so much. He was so brave to make that promise, and now, I have to be the brave one. I think he’d want me to try to live because that’s what I wanted. I owe it to him to try to

live without him.” He looked up at Phil, his decision crystallized in his eyes. “I want you to change me, Phil.”

It seemed that Wilbur was surprised when Phil didn’t immediately jump over the fire and bite him the instant he’d consented to the change. Instead, Phil had gone into a frenzy the moment the answer had come that surprised even himself.

He had never had a fledgling of his own, but he wasn’t a stranger to fledgling care. It had been something he’d taken a big part in during his early days in his original coven. Phil and his instincts both insisted that he needed to be back in his territory, back in his castle, back in his nest before turning Wilbur. New fledglings were fragile. Wilbur’s turning would be worse than normal in his ill state.

However, Wilbur was still weak, and Phil was certain no amount of waiting would make him stronger than he was now. The journey to the nearest boarder town in Phil’s territory was still almost a week’s walk away. He could speed up a bit now that Wilbur knew he was a vampire, but it was still a daunting task to get him there before his illness struck again.

Phil packed up everything that night and they were on the move before sunrise. Phil even moved through dawn and dusk, old enough to not burn in indirect sunlight and willing to take the discomfort to move for longer each day.

Wilbur still slept a lot in his arms, but when he was awake, Phil did his best to give him all the information he needed to prepare himself for a turning. It wouldn’t be enough, Phil knew, but it was something.

It wasn’t long into the journey that Wilbur began to deteriorate again at an unprecedented speed. Phil worried every night they wouldn’t make it before the boy absolutely needed to be turned, but Phil would get them as close as possible to home.

Wilbur spiked a high fever again at Phil’s territory’s boarder and he started slipping into a daze that was hard to stir him from, but Phil just pushed himself to go faster.

Wilbur spoke for the first time in more than a day about an hour’s trek from the town Phil was aiming for. “Phil,” he said weakly. “I think it’s going to have to be now or never.”

But it could not be here. I should be somewhere safe and sound and away from humans, but it definitely couldn’t be here out in the open only a couple of hours from sunrise. Yet, Wilbur’s eyes were clear and sure. Phil dithered.

“20 minutes,” Phil begged of him. “Is there any way you can find the strength to give me 20 minutes?”

Wilbur looked at him and seemed to steal himself. He nodded.

“Thank you,” Phil breathed. His brave, strong boy. His forever even if he did end up having to turn him in the cold dirt.

Phil dumped all of their supplies except for his money, his waterskin, and Wilbur's few possessions where he stood. Phil, as an ancient vampire, was fast, but he had never and would never again run as fast as he did that day.

They made it to the town and Wilbur was still breathing. Phil thought he might even still be conscious, gripping Phil's shirt with his eyes closed and jaw tensed.

There were night guards at the entrance to the village who looked at them in surprise as they approached. They must have recognized him when he came into their torch light. He doubted he'd remembered to keep the glamour on his eyes and most of the humans in his territory knew enough about how he looked to be able to piece it together.

"I need a carriage, horses, and a driver," he said before they could speak. "I need to get to Windswept Castle as fast as possible. Pack the driver meals. They cannot stop except to change out horses and they're under strict orders not to open the carriage doors." He tossed the bag of coins he'd kept at one of them. "I will give you and the driver 10 times this upon completion. Each."

"Y-yes sir," the guard said. "Right away, sir."

"Phil," Wilbur whispered.

"Where are the carriages?" Phil asked the remaining guard as the other sped off.

"On the north side of the stable, sir. Take the first one in the row. It's biggest."

Phil nodded and turned from him, racing to where he'd indicated the carriages were parked. He climbed into the first one and laid Wilbur out on its floor. Then, he bolted the door from the inside, bending the locking mechanism so it would be more difficult to open.

Wilbur's eyes watched him blearily.

"I'm going to turn you now, Wilbur," Phil told him, pulling himself close. "I'm sorry it's here, and I'm sorry it's going to hurt, but I'll be quick, and I'll make it up to you for the rest of forever, okay?"

There was fear in the boy's eyes, but determination as well. "I understand."

"Are you sure?" Phil asked.

"I'm sure," Wilbur said, one last cough rattling his chest. "I trust you."

By the time the driver made it to the carriage, knocking on the door only for Phil to spit at him to "go," Phil's venom was already slowing Wilbur's heart.

"Close your eyes and sleep," Phil said, pressing a kiss to his crinkled-up forehead as he tried to process the pain of the turning. "I'll be here when you wake."

Chapter End Notes

And... Techno will be arriving back at their decimated village right... about... now!
Ooops! I'm sure this will have no future consequences.

Like I said, I might add something to this, but for now, we are ending with Wilbur's turning. Not the best situation for a turning, not the worst.

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